

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FEAE-00 FPC-01 H-02

INR-07 INT-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03 SAM-01

OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-01 TRSE-00 FRB-03 PA-01 PRS-01

USIA-06 /100 W

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R 241520Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6075

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, MT, LY

SUBJECT: MINTOFF CLAIMS MALTA'S OIL SOURCES NOT LIMITED TO LIBYA

REFS: A. VALLETTA 527, MARCH 20, 1974; B. VALLETTA 185,  
JANUARY 30, 1974; C. VALLETTA 2435, DECEMBER 11, 1973

1. PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONING BY THE NATIONALIST OPPOSITION ON OIL IMPORTS INTO MALTA, ON MARCH 17 IS REPORTED TO HAVE ANNOUNCED IN PARLIAMENT THAT THE GOM IS FREE TO BUY "PETROL" FROM ANY SOURCE AND AT ANY PRICE AND CONDITION. HE ADDED THAT IT HAS MERELY BEEN TAKEN FOR GRANTED IN MALTA THAT "PETROL" WAS BEING PURCHASED ONLY FROM LIBYA; THAT ACTUALLY THE GOM WAS IMPORTING OIL FROM VARIOUS SOURCES AT THE BEST AVAILABLE PRICES AND CONDITIONS.

2. DESPITE OPPOSITION COMPLAINTS, THE PRIME MINISTER CONTINUED TO REFUSE TO DIVULGE TO PARLIAMENT SPECIFIC PRICES OR OTHER DETAILS RELATED TO GOM OIL IMPORTS AS "NOT IN THE NATIONAL  
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INTEREST." HE CHALLENGED THE OPPOSITION TO A TELEVISED

DEBATE ON THE OIL QUESTION AT ANY TIME; A CHALLENGE THAT WAS REFUSED BY NATIONALIST LEADER DR. G. BORG OLIVIER WITH THE RETORT THAT THE APPROPRIATE PLACE FOR SUCH A DISCUSSION WAS IN PARLIAMENT, NOT ON TELEVISION.

3. COMMENT: WHILE THE DIFFERENT NEWSPAPER REPORTS OF MINTOFF'S STATEMENTS TO PARLIAMENT REGARDING OIL IMPORTS VARY, THEY AGREE THAT THE SUBSTANCE CONVEYED BY THE PRIME MINISTER WAS THAT LIBYA IS NOT AND HAS NOT BEEN THE ONLY SOURCE OF OIL SUPPLIES FOR MALTA. THIS CLAIM IS CONTRARY TO THE GENERAL IMPRESSION CONVEYED IN EARLIER EMBASSY REPORTS, BUT IN LINE WITH MORE RECENT STORIES HEARD HERE THAT MALTA HAS BEEN PURCHASING "DISTRESS CARGO" OIL SHIPMENTS FROM TIME TO TIME FROM VARIOUS SOURCES. THE QUESTION OF OIL PRICES CONTINUES TO BE AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUE IN MALTA, AND A SORE SUBJECT WITH THE AVERAGE MALTESE. MINTOFF HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT IS REALIZING A PROFIT ON GASOLINE SALES, BUT VIGOROUSLY DENIES THE ALLEGATION THAT THIS IS, IN EFFECT, A HIDDEN TAX ON THE MALTESE MOTORIST. THIS ISSUE WILL CONTINUE TO RANKLE BECAUSE OF MINTOFF'S SECRETIVENESS AND "FATHER KNOWS BEST" ATTITUDE ABOUT IT. SMITH

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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** ENRG, MT, LY  
**To:** STATE  
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